

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER, 1970

No. 250

# Guide

A PUBLICATION OF THE PAULIST  
INSTITUTE FOR RELIGIOUS RESEARCH

Theology of Development

Michael Richards

Crucial Church Questions

Edward Schillebeeckx

G1070  
REV JOHN P MCPEAK  
ST JOSEPH'S CHURCH  
1100 WALNUT STREET  
ASHLAND, PA 17921



IT SEEMS TO ME

## Brussels Congress

In September, some two hundred leading Catholic theological scholars with about twenty non-Catholic theologians will gather at Brussels for what may well be one of the most significant theological conferences since Vatican II. The international Review *Concilium* will sponsor the Congress, with Cardinal Suenens as host.

"The Future of the Church" is the central theme. And the four lines of approach to this topic promise lively discussion leading to responsible guidance for the direction of Catholic renewal. 1. Is it the task of theology to provide an ideological underpinning of the established order or, rather, a method of criticism? 2. What is the essential Christian message? 3. The presence of the Church in the society of tomorrow. 4. Structures for the Church of tomorrow.

The Congress has been in the planning stage for two years. And Karl Rahner at a recent press conference indicated some of the reasons that motivated the organizers and the selection of the topics to be pursued. "Why is it," he asked, "that the secretariates set up at Rome for other Christians, for non-Catholic religions and for non-believers, as well as the Justice and Peace Commissions, have been so unproductive? Why is it that contacts between the theologians of the world Church and the guiding authorities of that Church have still been given no institutional expression, when such contacts are of the very first necessity at this time?"

An all-star cast has been assembled to provide background papers and includes notables like M-D Chenu, Yves Congar, Hans Küng, and Johannes Metz. Edward Schillebeeckx, the president of the conference, held out assurance that the issues of collegiality, co-responsibility and subsidiarity would come in for special examination. "With the aid of the human and social sciences today, can we give a theological outline of the structures within which the Church of the future must function to recover her credibility?" With men like these, asking this kind of question, renewal may get just the kind of nudge it desperately needs.

JOHN T. McGINN, C.S.P.

---

Guide, No. 250, August-September, 1970

Published 10 times a year (monthly except June-July, August-September when bi-monthly) at Noll Plaza, Huntington, Indiana 46750 by The Missionary Society of St. Paul the Apostle in the State of New York, 2852 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025. Second class postage paid Huntington, Indiana 46750. Rates 1 year, \$1.00; 10c a copy; bulk lots of 10 or more copies to seminarians and other groups at 5c a copy. Send change of address to Guide, 2852 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025

# Toward a Theology of Development of the World

Michael Richards

*THE CHURCH IS SEEKING TO GRASP THE REALITY  
OF GOD AND TO UNDERSTAND THE WORLD  
AS THE PLACE WHERE HE IS ACTIVE*

If action in favour of development is to find its true orientation and impulse, it must be the expression of a doctrine not simply of man, not simply of created reality, of the world, but of God. We need a morality, we need a philosophy of history, we need theories of different aspects of the social order, we need techniques, and from beginning to end of all this we need a spirituality. If we appeal only to the love of our neighbour as our motive for contributing to aid programmes in undeveloped countries, without acquiring a conviction about the relationship of that love to the love of God, then we shall be unintegrated, schizophrenic. We shall, literally, be halfhearted; the love which is our gravity, our dynamic, our energy, our polarizing force, will not be properly harnessed and directed.

In our thinking and action in favour of development, we are not trying to prove that the Church can be some use to the world after all; we are not trying to use Catholicism as an ideology which can trigger off the kind of social change we particularly want; we are not trying to devise a new humanism superior to that of political rivals. In all that the Church is attempting to do in this field, there is, however obscure and fumbling it may be, a new effort to grasp the reality of God and to

---

*Through the courtesy of THE CLERGY REVIEW (July, 1969) Father Richards is editor of this English periodical and is professor at St. Edmund's College.*

understand the world as the place where he is active.

Our action will have one character and quality if we see this world as no more than a vale of tears, if we see people as no more than souls to be snatched as brands from the burning, if we think of heaven as the blissful reward for an austere and unhappy struggle. It will have another character if we think as cheerfully as possible about our surroundings and our neighbours and try to do the best we can in this world without attempting to strain our minds after the incomprehensible reality of God, whom we can safely leave until the hereafter, when we shall have plenty of time to get acquainted. And if these two lines of approach leave us unsatisfied, as being pragmatically ineffective or intellectually restricted, then we need to look once again at the content of our faith in search of a better one.

#### *CHRIST THE PRINCIPLE OF CREATION*

Christian thinking about the development of the world starts from the fact that Christ is not simply an example to men, a manifestation within history of the nature of God, but the principle of creation itself. In him, creation finds more than its meaning; it discovers its existence. The hymn in honour of the primacy of Christ in St. Paul's epistle to the Colossians (i, 15-20) speaks of him as "the image of the invisible God" and "first-born of all creation". As image, Christ is the perfect revelation of God; he does not simply speak about him, but is, in his entire being, the expression of God. Through Christ and in him, says St. Paul, all things were created (v. 16). The background of his thought here is the understanding of the creative work of the Wisdom of God contained in Proverbs 8. God's Wisdom, independent of the cosmos and of man, originating from God and acting as the associate of God in a way that man does not, cooperates with God in making the world. As God's Wisdom, Christ expresses God himself and is active with God in creation; all things, including man, were made, not for man, but for Christ as image of the invisible God.

At the same time, Christ is "the first-born of all creation". In a context which sets Christ firmly outside the created universe ("He is before all things and in him all things hold together", v. 17), this title attributes to Christ another aspect of the divine Wisdom: as well as being transcendent, he is the principle of all created things (Prov. viii, 22). In making the universe God saw in Christ his own self-expression and his own Wisdom, the pattern of his work, and the manifestation of his glory. Creation depends upon Christ and refers constantly to him as its means of coming into being and of completion.

#### *KINGSHIP OF CHRIST*

The establishment of the Kingship of Christ will be the ultimate manifestation of the imprinted pattern of the Christ-life which the whole universe has received by its creation in him. It will be the complete working-out of a creative process the fundamental lines of which were established at the beginning. In Christ we see God as distinct from the world and as pre-existent; and in him also we see the start and the completion of creation. Because of Christ, the love of the world cannot be separated. Our way to the invisible God, the homing point of our love for him, is given to us by Christ himself, who makes him visible; and the same Christ is the first principle of creation in its origin, consistency and aim. God sees the world in Christ; if we love God, we look at the world in the same way. Christ is the image of God, not of the world; he is separate from the world, transcendent. At the same time, the world exists in him, and we cannot approach him without at the same time approaching the world.

The next part of the hymn develops the theme of Christ's second title to the primacy of all things. As well as being the first-born of all creation, he is the first-born from among the dead, and, as first-born, head of the Church. The Church is the product of a second course of action, distinct from the act of creation, undertaken by God in Christ to reconcile those who had become strangers and enemies (v. 21), through the blood of the cross (vv. 19, 20). Salvation

through the Cross drives out the discord which had entered the created order and puts peace in its place. Redemption in Christ is added to creation in Christ as the basis of a correct understanding of the world.

Action in the world will therefore be inseparable from attachment to God. And it is more than a duty laid upon us, a condition of salvation, a means of fulfilling our destiny. Action in the world is Christocentric. It is not aimed at the promotion of man or at the development of man as such; nor is it just an act of obedience to a God who is "outside" the world. It is part of creation by, in and for Christ, and part of redemption, reconciliation, through his work on the Cross. It flows from and expresses the love of God as life-giving and death-destroying. Mortification, in Christian spirituality, is the slaying of death, that life may be liberated, and never the slaying of anything created. We cannot give glory to God in Christ, image of God, first-born of all creatures, and first born from the dead, unless we are affirming and promoting created life.

#### CHRISTIANS AND THE WORLD

It has often been held that Christian eschatology deflects man's attention from this world, rendering his belief in the goodness of the created order notional rather than real by focussing his attention on a transcendent source and a heavenly goal. Does it, then, contradict what we have just seen of the relationship of Christ to the world? Does Christ set us within the world, only to take us out of it again in order to save us? Is the Christian attitude to the world fully represented by the prayer that

among the changes of this world, our hearts may be set on the one true home of joy (Collect, Easter 4)?

In both *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*, the Council showed its desire to bring out the significance of belief in heaven and heavenly fulfillment for our present concern with the temporal order. Chapter VII of *Lumen Gentium*, on the pilgrim

church, speaks of the ultimate completion and perfection of the created order, the whole universe as well as the human race, as something only to be reached "in the glory of heaven when the time comes 'for establishing all'" (Acts iii, 21). But this ultimate completion is not to be seen as an opening of prison-house doors or as a longed-for demobilization, with "Roll on, Blighty" setting the tone for Christian prayer. "The promised restoration to which we look forward has already had its beginning in Christ. It receives impetus on the sending of the Holy Spirit and is continued by his efforts in the Church. . . . We, meanwhile, in expectation of a good future, are bringing to completion the work in the world entrusted to us" (L.G. 48).

#### TRUE EXPRESSION OF CHRISTIAN HOPE

The future restoration has already begun, and, far from distracting our attention from work in this world, is a most powerful stimulus to our involvement in the development of this world. "The end of the ages has already reached us (cf. I Cor. x, II) and the world is already irrevocably set on the renewal which is anticipated in a real way in this life" (L.G. 48). The end of the ages is both completion and judgment, as ch. VII reminds us at some length; if this end "has already reached us," then there is a process of renewal going on in the world, with its source in the creative and redemptive action of God, a process to which we can commit ourselves or to which we can refuse our cooperation; and by our present attitude and action we are already judged, we are already moving towards our own perfection or away from it. The fact of creation, re-creation and fulfillment in Christ has set the true pattern and provided the energy, motive and stimulus for human activity in the world. The correct expression of Christian hope is our firm grasp of present time and our extroverted involvement in our present situation.

*Gaudium et Spes* rejected any idea that the Christian life is a matter of saving one's soul by walking unscathed through the gin-traps of this world.

They are wide of the mark who think that because here we have no lasting city but we seek the city that is to come, they can neglect their duty here on earth; they forget that the faith increases their obligation to fulfill those duties in accordance with their vocation (G.S. 43).

The Christian message does not distract men from building up the world nor induce them to neglect the welfare of their fellows, but rather obliges them more strictly to these tasks (G.S. 34).

Faithful Christians making their way to heaven should look for and set their minds on the things that are above. But this increases rather than diminishes the importance of their task of co-operating with all men in building a more human world (G.S. 57; cf. 39).

#### LOVING GOD AND LOVING HIS WORLD

Those who speak of the Church as "bowing down before the world" since the Council have quite misunderstood the bearing of these texts. There is no question of putting the world in the place of God or of regarding the exploration and use of the world's resources as a sufficient religion for modern man. The Council is asking us to act on the fundamental Christian belief that we cannot love God without loving what he has made. Far from being an attempt to find the world sufficiently meaningful without God, *Gaudium et Spes* sees that the world can only take on its full significance in the light of Christian faith. And in saying this, it makes clear the fact that Christian faith itself is empty unless the world is taken seriously as the field of God's activity, of which we are part and in which we are consciously, rationally and freely involved.

"The World of Today" which the Council had in mind is the world of men, the entire human family, its whole environment; the world which is the theatre of human history, marked with man's industry, his triumphs and disasters (G.S. 2).

This is the world as made by God through Christ (John i, 10), the world into which Christ was sent and into which he sent the Apostles (John xvii). It includes "all things," not simply the human race (Col. i, 15-20; Rom. viii, 19-22). Now this world can certainly be seen as hostile to God; it is deeply scarred by sin and is under the influence of enemy powers. "World" is used by both St. John and St. Paul in this sense; there can be no naïve acceptance of it on the part of the Christian, who must in fact, on account of the corruption running through the world, distrust it and turn aside from it. The Council did not forget this; the world "was enslaved indeed to sin" (G.S. 2). But the dominant thought of the Christian, which guides his discernment in the midst of the alternatives offered him by the world, is his conviction that the world has been freed from this slavery by Christ crucified and risen from the dead "so that according to God's design it may be transformed and achieve its fulfillment" (G.S. 2).

#### NEITHER RIVALS NOR ENEMIES

Now this liberation was prepared for and brought out, and is at present being carried to completion, within the world, within the created temporal order. This is one of the great contemporary mutations in Christian thinking, clearly visible in the Council documents: the Church and the world, the spiritual and the temporal, are not separate juxtaposed powers or organisms which must necessarily be rivals. *Lumen Gentium* quotes the well-known affirmation of the *Epistle to Diognetus*: "Christians must be in the world what the soul is in the body" (L.G. 38). This can all too easily be understood in a Platonist or Cartesian sense: the soul is "superior" to the body, the spiritual must "rule" the temporal. But the power which rules in the world is not a jurisdiction, a "sword," whether temporal or spiritual: it is the power of the Risen Christ. Christ is both temporal, or material, and spiritual; his power is that of an order of existence, a total life, which is working in the world to transform it as a whole.

The Church, at once "a visible assembly and a spiritual community" marches with the whole of humanity, shares the fortunes of the world here below, exists as the leaven, we might say the soul, of human society, to renew it in Christ and transform it into God's family (G.S. 40).

There is no service of the Risen Christ which is not service of the world which he has raised up. The power of the Spirit is a power effective in the penetration and transformation of the world, not set beside the world, but its living principle.

The unity of world and Church is not brought about by the control of one sphere by another, by the clericalization of the world or the secularization of the Church. The unity of the world and the Church already exists in Christ, in whom it is constantly growing in depth and extent.

#### *MISSION AND PROGRAMME OF CHRIST*

It is important to remember that the Church's attempt to understand and guide its activity in the world in the light of the fundamental principles of its belief does not simply produce a new theory, a new ideology, a speculative basis for correct behaviour. A theology without faith and devotion can be a dangerous cutting instrument. Theology is only the Church's means of getting a clearer vision of the Lord of the Church, of Jesus of Nazareth. Our Christology can easily be no more than a transliteration of our own private theories about the cosmos; our doctrine of man a repetition of well-meaning commonplaces. We have to return constantly to the fact that the Christ for whom the world was made is the Jesus of the Gospels, and that the man in whom all men should see themselves is the Son of Man who came to serve and to save mankind. In such a perspective, development will be seen to be not any and every sort of "promotion of the human", control over natural resources, or enrichment in knowledge, property and experience, but only those human actions which fit in with the mission and programme of Christ.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me to preach

good news to the poor,  
He has sent me to proclaim release to  
the captives  
and recovering of sight to the blind,  
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
to proclaim the acceptable year of the  
Lord.

(Isaiah lxi, 1-2;Luke iv, 18-19)

#### *WIDER VISION OF CHRISTIAN LIFE*

These are the categories of human being in whose favour the fundamental principle of the universe is at work. The Sermon on the Mount is a statement of the law which rules creation and which says that the fruits of development are reserved for certain categories of men and women and for those who identify themselves with these categories in the search for an order in harmony with the love of God. In his description of the Last Judgment (Matt. xxv, 31-46), our Lord showed that precisely the same cosmic law will be at work in the final winding-up of all things. All will work out in favour of those whose relationship with the world has been expressed through feeding the hungry, welcoming strangers, clothing the naked, and visiting those in prison; they are the ones who, even though they did not know it, were serving Christ, were obedient to the first principle of life and were contributing towards the attainment of its final end. The kingdom which they will enter is the one which has been prepared for them from the foundation of the world (Matt. xxv, 34), the kingdom of the Christ who is "before all things" (Col. i, 17); and this kingdom was proclaimed by the same Christ from the beginning of his ministry in Palestine (Matt. iv, 17).

Development is based on far more than a vague moralism, a desire to share with others the goods of this world, or even the hope for the establishment of world-wide peace. Its dynamic is the energy of God himself and its growing point is human poverty. There can be no true prayer which does not focus on this source, which does not turn our attention to God-with-us in human destitution and promote his saving purpose in his world. Christian humanism

involves the poverty of ourselves for the enrichment of others. It involves the reversal of our present instincts, which develop the world by gathering it in towards ourselves, because it knows that the world only develops if our energies are released into it, if we fall into the ground and die.

If violent revolution means that we use force to ensure that someone else gives up riches for the sake of others, then we should beware of it, for it could be a return to that exterior domination, to the theory of the two swords, which we are trying to reject. We cannot harness the energy of God and direct it against others. The judgment of

God is not ours to control. The violence must be done to ourselves, if the world is to be changed.

And if development were taken to mean that superior should help inferior, but not change places with him, then we should have missed the point again; we should be attempting to annex and make private use of the goodness of God.

Revolution and development are neither of these things. They are conformity with the law that rules creation, from beginning to end: the law of Christ, that in this world we should die with him, so that others, with him and with us, should rise again.

#### **PRAYER AND RELEVANCE**

The reality of Christ and His relevance is not met in an exclusive way in prayer, but the more particularized word of Christ and the more particularized meeting with Christ in this deeply interior and immediate way give us the sensitivity to hear the word of Christ aright as it is spoken through the mouth of the secular world. It assures priests and religious that they will be true to their sign of the kingdom by assuring them that they can speak convincingly of the reality of Christ, His presence, His gospel and His relevance. To this degree the problem of relevancy is a prayer problem. Without prayer there is no relevance.

In religious life (as also in the diocesan priesthood) the setting aside of certain hours for prayer is not an adequate signal of the centrality of prayer. This is not to say that designated times of prayer should be necessarily abandoned, but simply that a religious community does not witness to the kingdom through the centrality of prayer by assigning sizable amounts of time to public and private prayer. This would be to reduce the sign of the kingdom to purely external realities. What is decisive is not the time given to prayer, though that might be an index of what value a community places upon prayer, but prayer attitudes and the actuality of prayer.

Kilian McDonnell  
America, July 11, 1970

# Crucial Questions

## Facing the Church Today

Edward Schillebeeckx

### ***HOW AUTHORITY SHOULD FUNCTION IN THE CHURCH AND THE ROLE OF THE THEOLOGIAN AND THE MAGISTERIUM***

I would like to take up a few concrete aspects of one central and crucial issue: the functioning of authority in the Church, and specifically within the Roman Catholic Church. For the sake of clarity one could perhaps say that this is an ecclesiastical problem within the larger ecclesiological context. It is important that it be seen within the broader context, for to a great extent it will be in and through the concrete decisions and functioning of authority in the whole life of the Church that the Church comes to the deeper realization of what it means to be Church in the challenging world in which we live.

It is particularly the functioning of authority which is posing completely new problems in the life of the Church. Formerly, in the Middle Ages—in the "established" Church of that time—all relation-

ships were simply regulated by authority, with respect to which the subjects were expected to be completely submissive in all things. At the present time, authority is not denied—ecclesiastical authority will

---

*By special arrangement with Newman Press. This paper represents a substantial portion of a chapter in "The Crucial Questions" (On problems facing the Church today.) Each chapter is based on interviews with Yves Congar, Jean Danielou, Edward Schillebeeckx, Piet Schoonenberg, Johannes Metz and Karl Rahner.*

*The copyright for this volume is in the name of International Publishing Consultants. The composition and translation, based on interviews with Father Schillebeeckx, is by Dr. Robert C. Ware.*

always be present in the Church—but it is beginning to function in a completely new way, and this is causing a shift all along the line in Church life.

Consider the papacy, for example: the Petrine office. I have no doubt but that this will continue to be a kernel element in our Catholic faith in times to come. But as this begins to function altogether differently in the world of today which has been dispossessed of its feudal structures, the papacy will take on an completely different countenance, even while the essence of the Petrine service is preserved. Perhaps it will even fall more into the background and only on occasion come to the fore, whereas now the whole Church life continues to revolve around the center in Rome.

#### AUTHORITY PRESERVES STABILITY AND CONTINUITY

We are living in a period of transition in which the tensions are at times almost tragic. This is a time when the openness on the bottom, the democratic elements, are speaking up more and more, even to the point of imposing themselves. Such a situation invariably provokes a reaction whereby the central authority has a tendency to entrench its position. I suspect that the transition cannot proceed serenely and that conflicts are inevitable. Authority will from time to time intervene too drastically in order to keep things under control, while on the other hand the community of the faithful, too, will commit occasional excesses in resisting authority and pressing for change.

We should not, however, think that centralized authority operates only as a negative function. It has an important positive function to perform in a period of transition by preserving stability and continuity. Imagine that the highest authority, truly seeing the transition toward a more democratic structure, would retire completely from the scene. This could easily lead to chaos! Even in a democracy there is authority. I'm not opposed to authority; quite the contrary. The issue is: how does it function? Everything depends on whether the concrete individuals in

authority are able to comprehend this new situation and play their proper role in it. The man in authority has a very active role to play, but not according to former authoritarian patterns which would only thwart the whole evolution or seriously handicap it.

In the Church today concretely, I would say that the democratic element is coming out ever more clearly. You find this first of all on the bottom of the institutional structure in the various Church provinces and local Churches in the relationships between the bishops and their faithful. Here a more democratic structure is already evident in many places. It presupposes that the bishop himself have a new conception of the functioning of his authority. As this episcopal image gradually takes form within a democratic perspective, the highest authority in Rome can to a great extent allow the local Churches to work out their own problems while, of course, maintaining continuous contact between the local authorities and the central authority in Rome. By restoring to every bishop the ancient title of *vicar of Christ* the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* has, in effect, laid the foundation for a theology of the local Church in which the universal Church is represented. At the same time, all tendencies toward diocesan isolation or insularity are precluded by the very idea of collegiality which presupposes that every religious community is open to the whole body.

#### STIMULUS TO LOCAL CHURCHES

The function of Rome in all this is not to intervene and tell one local Church to put on the brakes because other Church provinces are not yet so far along. On the contrary, Rome can register the progress in one Church province and then act as a stimulus in other provinces where the development is moving more slowly. Thus, I would see the task of central authority more in the function of coordination among all the local Churches. Moreover, it would be a bit ludicrous for the Church to completely decentralize now and leave every-

thing up to the local Churches at a point in history when, on the plane of world politics, we see all the nations endeavoring to attain a certain centralization in the interests of world unification. A similar tendency is evident among the various Protestant Churches. It would be foolish for the democratization within the Catholic Church to lead to such insularity of the separate Church provinces that the co-ordinating central authority would be pushed completely out of the picture. I think rather that in a world striving for global unification central authority assumes a greater function and responsibility, not a lesser. As far as I'm concerned, it must only function in a new way, primarily as stimulus and coordinating center.

#### DIVERSITY WITHIN COMMUNION

On the other hand, I feel that the central authority of Rome also comprises a certain function of control. But here too the question is how that control is exercised. I think the principle here must be that the highest authority must in the first instance have confidence in its subordinates, that is to say, in the bishops to the extent that they are subordinate. They have their own authority in their own Church provinces, of course, but they must still live in communion with the other local Churches and, thus, also with the See of Rome. Subordination means, then, living in communion with the others, and in this sense there is also place for control, but a control which in the first place is based on complete confidence in the national hierarchies. As it is now you sometimes get the impression that it is a control founded on distrust of the local Churches.

It is to be hoped that the mutual communion of the local Churches will in the course of time come to function more flexibly, for example through the Synod of Bishops. It has already been clearly manifested that this communion among the local Churches and with Rome can best function in a collegial manner, as opposed to the pre-synodal schema of central authority opposite all the others.

This collegial-synodal principle must now become operative in the whole communication process—concretely, for example, in the preparation of the formal synodal meetings. I would like to emphasize strongly the synodal principle. Herein there is still a central authority, but one which functions in service of and as an integral part of a synodal and democratic structure which at the same time is a specifically Church structure. Otherwise, where the center stands apart from and opposite all the others, communication disturbances are inevitable, and this at a time when the Church's new self-understanding conceives of the Church as the sacrament of inter-human communication and dialogue.

#### SYNODAL PRINCIPLE BEGINS AT LOCAL LEVEL

Needless to say, this democratic, synodal principle also applies at the lower echelons of the ecclesiastical structure within a single Church province or diocese. I believe that it will actually take shape there more rapidly than at the global level of the world Church. As genuine democratic structures begin to function within a single Church province, the idea will carry over almost automatically into other Church provinces and so toward the center and the world Church.

The formula which has been adopted here in the Netherlands, for example, in the Pastoral Council seems to me characteristic for this new synodal principle: it is not the bishops who make the decisions after consulting others, but the episcopacy in conjunction with all the faithful. Everyone has an active voice in the decision-making process. There must, of course, be a certain representation in this process; the whole of Catholic Holland cannot cast votes on every issue. But still, the principle is that a finely nuanced representation of the whole people makes the decisions, the final decisions, in union with the bishops. This is a totally new formula which is not to be found anywhere else in the Church. If this proves successful in the Pastoral Council here in Holland, then it will become a kind of model and example for others. And should this structure

be implemented in various Church provinces, it would virtually impose itself on the synodal structure of the world Church. Frankly, I don't believe that this can be achieved by decreeing a synodal structure from above. The thinking of the bishops is not ready for it. In the last analysis they are not yet thinking synodally.

### LAITY AND DECISION MAKING

Another aspect in the implementation of the synodal principle in the world Church is the representation and participation of the faithful, in particular the laity, not only through their bishops but directly on a national and international level by means of corresponding lay organizations. This must, however, proceed in stages. Consider the recent Lay Congress in Rome (October, 1967) held at the same time as the Synod of Bishops. In the resolutions on the last day of the Congress they made a sharp distinction between themselves and the episcopacy, saying that the decisions pertain to the hierarchy of the world Church. They did not ask to take part in the decisions, but only to be consulted at every level, from parish and diocese up to and including the central administration of the Church. They desire to see a serious consultation of the laity in every Church decision. I find this demand in a certain sense minimal. The Pastoral Council in the Netherlands has gone much further: the laity do not simply advise the bishops; they collaborate with the bishops in making the decisions themselves. But this must come in stages: if the experienced and qualified advice of the laity is taken into account at every level of the decision-making process, then the whole structure is already undergoing change. And this incorporation of the laity must really take place at every level, including even the Roman Curia and the Bishops' Synod.

Let us not neglect the priests in all this. Here is for me a crucial problem: the priests are being left out everywhere. One sees only the episcopacy and the laity, while priests and also religious as it were

disappear in the mist. Yet they are precisely the people who feel most critically the crisis in all these changes of structure. There is a real danger here. There needs to be an advisory council of priests along with that of the laity. It is the bishop with his presbyteral council who should go to the bishops' conferences and to the Synod in Rome. This can also take place on a representative basis; clearly he can't take all his priests with him. But it must be genuinely representative. Just as the bishops elect their representatives to the Synod in Rome, so too the council of priests who accompany the bishops to conferences and synods should be chosen by the priests themselves, and not simply appointed by the bishop who tends to take along his own men. It is interesting to note that according to the *Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops* (promulgated October 28, 1965) the clerical members of the bishop's pastoral advisory council are to be selected by the bishop himself; however, according to the *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests* (December 7, 1965) priests are to choose their own representatives!

### CLERGY NEED REPRESENTATION

Thus, in addition to the laity and distinct from them, the priests must also be represented. Otherwise we shall once again be harnessed with a skewed relationship, comparable to the difficulties experienced in the early centuries of the Church between deacons and priests. Then it was the deacons who were the influential advisors of the bishop and the priests were left completely in the background. The result was a competence conflict between priests and deacons. Now we are faced with the prospect of a competence struggle between priests and laity with respect to the bishop. A typical example was an election of delegates here in the Netherlands for one of the diocesan councils: of the sixty delegates chosen there were only four priests. This is a disproportionate, if not completely distorted, relationship. Therefore, in my opinion, the lay council and the priests' council should be distinct bodies. There

may well be a certain overlapping, but when one speaks of episcopal administration this really includes the bishop's presbyteral college, and this body must be genuinely represented in determining pastoral policy.

### THEOLOGIANS WITHIN THE CHURCH

Another issue which, in my opinion, is deserving of explicit attention is the functioning of theology and the position of the theologian within the Church. Through the last Council theology has to a great extent reassumed its proper function in the Church, namely, the scientific function within the community of faith and in the service of this community and the whole Church. There has in point of fact been a positive revalorization of theology's specific function in the Church. But, the circumstances which, through the Council and the Bishops' Synod, have restored to theologians their proper ecclesiastical function, have also produced a certain conflict situation. This is the conflict between the Magisterium, the official teaching authority in the canonical sense of the word (and thus in particular the authority of "Rome"), on the one hand, and on the other, the more moral, scientific authority of the theologians. This had led to a situation wherein a large portion of the faithful actually pay more attention to the authority of theologians than to the canonical authority of the Roman Magisterium. In other words, a few articles by different theologians can in fact have more authority than an encyclical of the Pope.

I would say that this is of course an abnormal situation. However, the abnormality consists in the fact that the canonical authority does not make sufficient use of the moral authority of the theologians working throughout the world, but restricts itself to one particular school of theology, the Roman school, which is no longer representative for theological thought as a whole. This is the source of much friction. As soon as this canonical authority, the Roman Magisterium, begins to assimilate the results of theological research and

reflection throughout the world, then the Roman authority will again be taken more seriously and can again exercise its positive function of coordinating and stimulating theological endeavor.

Here lies in my estimation the current problem with respect to the Church Magisterium. In the first place I think the term Catholic theology is a misnomer since there are many Catholic theologies, many directions within what is called Catholic theology, and all of these "schools" have their role to play. The problem is that the central Magisterium has been too much based on one particular school which is no longer representative. As a consequence there is a widespread hesitation bordering on suspicion of the statements of the Magisterium, since one always suspects that they are based on thought which is not representative of what lives in the whole Church.

### FUNCTION OF THE MAGISTERIUM

On the other hand, I wouldn't want to create the impression that the *diakonia* or service of theology is merely a function of the Magisterium. It is in the first instance a service to the whole Church and thus, also, to the Magisterium. The scientific reflection of theologians functions as witness for the whole of the faithful in a direct way and not only via the official Magisterium.

Naturally the Magisterium remains the judge of everything that is proposed in the field of theology, but it needs to function more in coordination with the life of the whole Church. In that case it would also function more harmoniously within this whole new theology which in the last analysis is also an expression of the whole Church community. Therefore, to the extent that it needs to be structured, I would personally like to see every bishops' conference have an advisory commission of theologians. Each conference should have a kind of team of theologians to act as its advisors—and certainly not just one theologian: every theologian has his short-comings and one-sidedness. A Church province or a bishops' conference can scarcely afford to abandon

itself to the thought of just one theologian.

Positively, there should be an organic unity and collaboration between the Magisterium and the whole of theological endeavor. Naturally this does not deny that the official teaching authority also has a judicial function with respect to the interpretations of theologians. However, that official authority must be organically integrated into the whole. It is not so that only theologians engage in theological thought while the official Magisterium simply waits to pass judgment on the rightness or wrongness of what theologians have to say. If that were so, one would be forced to wonder on what grounds they can pass any judgment at all. Even granted the assistance of the Holy Spirit, it must somehow be made operative in the whole reflective process. There is no special gift which as it were illuminates the understanding, intelligence and capacity for judgment of the official authorities. The official Magisterium can only exercise its specific function if it thinks along with the others, organically integrated into the whole process of theological thought.

AUTHORITY  
FROM  
CHRIST

The organic unity of official authority and theological endeavor also implies that each has a specific character and function. The authority of the official Magisterium is not a purely theological authority the same as that of theologians. The Church Magisterium has its specific task which is not that of the theologians. To deny the specific character of magisterial authority would eliminate authority altogether so that only the community would remain. One can say that authority in the Church comes from the community, but then this specific community which is a Christian *communio* and in which Christ is the binding factor. In this sense authority still comes from Christ. As far as I'm concerned, the authority which comes from Christ and that which comes from the Church community is one and the same, but it is nevertheless still authority. Even in a purely human community the *demos*, the people, and the authority natur-

ally form one whole. But within that whole there is a difference of task, a distinction in *diakonia*. The same holds true with respect to the Church Magisterium in my opinion.

The experience of the Protestant Churches is enlightening in this respect. There the magisterial authority is more an intrinsic function of theology itself, but with the result that the theological faculties are the actual magisterium; with this structure I must disagree. Repeatedly during Vatican Council I was struck by favorable remarks from Protestants impressed with the functional setup whereby the Council was for a great part carried on by the theologians but with the final decisions reserved to the true *pastores*, the bishops. Numerous Protestants remarked that this was a highly desirable arrangement in distinction to their own Churches where the teaching authority in the last analysis comes down to the theological faculties and, in effect, to certain individual theologians: Barth, Bultmann, and so forth. This leads to enormous tensions and friction between the authority of the academy or theological faculty and the authority of the synod and Church community.

DIALOGUE  
WITH  
HEALTHY TENSION

A certain amount of tension is a healthy phenomenon, but it can become a hypertension if the theologians become the decisive authorities in the Church, or on the other hand, if the ecclesiastical authority is exercised apart from and, as it were, in spite of the theologians. In both instances the tension is no longer salutary. But a certain interaction and even tension between the pastoral authority—the official teaching authority is also a pastoral authority—and the scientific authority of theologians seems a good thing to me within a democratic structure. This is but another instance of that dialogal character of the Church whereby the historical decisions of Christian engagement are operative both within the scientific field and within the pastoral realm. This is the meaning of that concept of organic unity which recognizes the specificity of theological authority and of the

official teaching authority. If the essential structure of the Church is dialogue—dialogue with the world, dialogue with the other religions and the other Christian Churches, then the structures of authority within one Church must also be exercised as dialogue. Part of the tension and friction which now exists comes from the fact that the official authority is still exercised too much as a monologue which fails to take into account what is going on in the world and in the world Church.

### COMMUNICATION OUR BASIC ATTITUDE

The concept of dialogue has appeared frequently in these pages. We have not hesitated to speak of the Church as the sacrament of dialogue and interhuman communication. It is indeed the Church's renewed understanding of herself and of the world which implies an inner demand for a Church in dialogue. What is new here is that the Church as a whole, including the Church as a hierarchy, has accepted dialogue with the world as a *principle* and as a *basic attitude*. This emerges clearly from the documents of the Second Vatican Council and from encyclicals such as *Pacem in terris*, *Ecclesiam suam* and *Populorum progressio*. In conclusion here I would like to summarize certain fundamental changes in emphasis and attitude in the Church's self-understanding as these are officially formulated in the documents of Vatican II:

1. The earlier tendency to identify the Church too readily with the Kingdom of God has been abandoned and the idea of the Church as the people of God that is still on the way is more strongly emphasized.

2. The wrong or crude interpretation given in the past to the idea of *extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* has been superseded. It is thus becoming increasingly clear that salvation is not the exclusive possession of the Church.

3. The Roman Catholic Church recognizes the ecclesial character of the non-Catholic Christian communities.

4. She also recognizes the authentically religious aspects in non-Christian religions and even the presence of the Christian "new

man" and therefore of Christianity itself in all men of good will.

5. God's saving will is also more clearly recognized outside Israel and Christianity, with the result that it cannot strictly be denied that there are elements of revelation outside Israel and Christianity.

6. Emphasis is laid on the Church as the people of God before any distinction is made within the ministries in the Church, and specifically before the distinction is made between clergy and laity. It is the whole Church as the people of God which has received the anointing of the Spirit and, in its general priesthood, is itself the active bearer of the unique Good News and its Christian tradition.

7. Finally, the Council has affirmed the saving presence of God in the secular political, social and economic evolution of mankind.

### FAITH AND PRACTICE

This albeit incomplete summary of elements in the pronouncements by the Second Vatican Council at least affirms that there is witness to the truth outside the Church as well and that, on this basis, dialogue is necessary for the Church. But there is need not only for a reflexive dialogue. There must also be an existential Christian engagement in the real life problems of the world, a "*présence au monde*", a pro-existence and Christian saving presence. The *Pastoral Constitution* of Vatican II has made it emphatically clear that Christians themselves are partially to blame, for example, for the widespread increase of atheism, because they have failed to make the living God sufficiently visible in their own lives. Indeed, "this split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age". The Constitution repeatedly insists that precisely through his faith a Christian bears a special responsibility for secular matters and for his fellowman. This Christian presence does not involve any complicity with the world, but neither is it simply a matter of (naïve) religious piety. It is a full-scale commitment

of flesh and blood, gut and grit, and expertise.

The terrible intensity and complexity of Christian presence struck me most forcefully during my recent trip to the United States (Nov., 1967—Jan., 1968). To cite but one example, on several occasions I came in contact with various racial movements. As you listen to these Negroes relating their personal experiences you cannot help being moved to the depths of your heart. Here is a people who have been outraged and debased to the very marrow of their bones—perhaps more through the institutional “structures” than by actual personal affront. Their patience has been exhausted and many say: “If America can shed blood for unclear reasons in Vietnam, why shouldn’t we do the same thing in order to obtain our fundamental rights to life here?” I also heard repeatedly from these people, many of whom have a Protestant Christian background: “All the Christian Churches have failed here.” These are moments which make you feel that it can be more Christian to forget about our intra- and inter-Church problems, that you can only become “Church” by taking your hands out of your pockets and starting to do something.

#### **NEED FOR SCIENTIFIC EXPERTISE**

But almost immediately you run up against such complicated structures that you realize that the evangelical inspiration must be transformed into scientific expertise capable of finding the suitable restructuring of society on a mammoth socio-economic and political, local and national scale. Spontaneous evangelical “deeds”, however beautiful and even necessary, are only a band-aid on a broken leg. Thus, a truly Christian saving presence will have to adapt itself to the extremely complex structures of our modern society if it is to give genuine expression to that hope in a “new heaven and a new earth”, a hope which at one and the same time radicalizes our efforts for a bet-

ter future on earth, and *relativizes* every already existing socio-political order inasmuch as it is not yet the new world of God’s Promise.

Christian commitment to the ordering of human society here and now, and Christian opposition to all injustices that disrupt peace among men may rightly appeal to Scripture. In the situation in which Christianity finds itself in the world today, this commitment must be experienced as the secular worship required by the biblical essence of Christianity. Secular life itself must be a “spiritual worship”. Christian faith is not a flight from the world into the Church’s liturgy. It aims to enable the world itself to share in the coming of the Kingdom of God, a kingdom of peace, righteousness and love. Faith affirms that life in the world is ultimately meaningful and worth living, thanks to Jesus the Christ. The Second Vatican Council repeatedly affirmed this Christian view—the eschatological expectation of Christianity does not limit the Christian task in this world, but rather completes and stimulates it in the light of new motives. Christianity does not imply any neglect of the secular task; on the contrary, it gives Christians a more urgent incentive to carry it out. Their eschatological expectation urges Christians to work for a better world for all people.

#### **REFORM AND PURIFICATION**

Finally, we must not forget that the “world” in the Johannine sense of the evil world is not only a reality outside the Church. It also enters into the Church itself. For this reason, every genuine dialogue—dialogue between the Churches, dialogue with the world religions, and dialogue with the world itself—must begin with and continually be inspired by *metanoia*. From the Church’s point of view this is the principle of the *Ecclesia sancta, sed semper reformanda et purificanda*, the holy Church always in need of reform and purification.

# Books Received

The God of Space and Time

Bernard J. Cooke

Holt, Rinehart and Winston. \$4.95

The author's aim in this the first of a two-volume work, is to "bring twelve key areas of present-day religious thought into sharp interaction with the biblical literature, hoping to show thereby that the faith-experience of Old Testament Israel and primitive Christianity can still make a profound impact on our human situation." In the three early chapters of the present volume, the writer deftly traces the self-revelation God gave to Israel, and in three following chapters he delineates the early Christian community's living experience of the risen Christ, and their vital contact with Jesus in prayer and in the Eucharist.

As the title of the book indicates, the God of Israel and of Christianity is the God "who acts in history." Thus two themes constantly recur in these pages: revelation and faith. Israel's faith is a response of a people to God's gradual revelation of himself, particularly in historical events such as the liberation from Egypt. The people of Israel come to recognize and increasingly understand their God because of the religious experience of its great prophetic personalities. God willed "to make himself personally present to the consciousness of certain key men, such as the prophets, and through them to the consciousness of the people."

In the fullness of time, God's revelation of himself unfolding in the New Testament, focuses on the person of Jesus Christ; and what he reveals is primarily himself. He reveals the Father's love for men by his death. But the faith-response of his followers arose from their experience of the risen Jesus. They were vividly aware of his continuing presence with them, particularly in the "breaking of the bread" of the Eucharist. Their deepest conviction

was that their Lord was vitally in their midst and that he would remain until his second coming in glory.

Their faith was to be a viable option for ensuing ages. And Christian disciples today can echo the early poignant question: "Lord, to whom shall we go?" As the author puts it, "Christian faith is not the acceptance of a body of doctrines, nor is it the observance of laws or the performance of cult: it is a personal relationship to the risen Christ which Christians share with one another in the community of the Church."

Until this year, the author served for some thirteen years as chairman of the department of theology at Marquette University. As teacher and lecturer, he worked with outstanding success to bring the best insights of contemporary theology to religious educators. A second volume, on the Church, will round off this present notable venture.

There's More Than One Way

To Teach Religion

Mary Perkins Ryan and

Russell J. Neighbor

Paulist Press. (Paperback) \$4.95

This is one of the most stimulating, practical and encouraging books on religious education this reviewer has read in a very long time. It is concerned with the religious education of Catholics, particularly in "out-of-school" situations. With adults becoming more confused regarding Christian teachings (or growing more vividly aware of their deficiencies) and with the ever-increasing number of young Catholics who do not attend Catholic schools, the problem is glaringly real and acute. Fortunately, an increasing number of catechists have been stirred to exercise their intelligence, imagination and inventiveness to meet this difficulty.

Over thirty of these experiments, or noteworthy reflections on our catechetical needs, have been collected here by the editors of *The Living Light*, where these articles originally appeared. It is not generally recognized, but the "new" catechetics has had an enviable growth in our country, despite incredible difficulties and opposition. This volume testifies to the soundness of that development. It reflects a recognition that the whole "Christian community must grow up together in Christ if its members are to grow as individuals." And there is something here for everybody's need: adults and youngsters—and workable suggestions for bishops, clergy, religious and "do-it-yourself" lay catechists.

"For the most urgent need of religious education today," the editors rightly contend, "is not people willing to give pat answers as to 'what' should be taught or simple solutions as to 'how' to teach it, but more and more people asking the right questions, and humbly together, in smaller and larger communities, seeking more adequate solutions."

#### Grace in Freedom

Karl Rahner

Herder and Herder. \$5.95

This is a valuable compilation of miscellaneous writings of Karl Rahner. They include newspaper articles, radio talks, essays, sermons and lectures covering the years 1964 to 1968. One section is of especial theological importance where the writer discusses the Christian understanding of freedom as it relates to human self-realization, and God's free gift of himself as man's highest good and greatest value, to be constantly chosen and repeatedly reaffirmed.

Other chapters, often in a refreshingly popular style, are generally concerned with the postconciliar issues that are debated in the Church. He points up the special necessity of re-education for religious leaders, the case for boldness and risk as the safer course in the choices that confront us today, and he has a valuable reminder that Vatican II insisted on a "hierarchy of truths" within Christian teaching. He dis-

cusses various church structures, the legitimate authority of the magisterium — along with matters like divorce, factors involved in change, democracy in the church and theologians' need to dialogue with the Church as a whole.

The writer is usually measured, sometimes chatty and even colloquial, and occasionally blunt. "A chess club," he says, "is meant to promote good chess playing. The president and all the officials have validity only insofar as they help toward this end. The true stars of the chess club are those who play it well, not the president or treasurer—who may even be players who have failed. So with the Church: all officials, from pope on down, exist only that there may be committed Christians who believe and love and hope deeply. Papal decrees, organization and sermons are to foster the true Christian life in the hearts of men. If this be lost there is left only ridiculous presumption before God." J.T.M.

## GUIDE

- A Publication of the Paulist Institute for Religious Research.
- Officers: Joseph V. Gallagher, C.S.P., Director. George C. Hagmaier, C.S.P., Associate Director. Editor of Guide, John T. McGinn, C.S.P.
- Concerned with ecumenism, Christian witness and adult catechetics.
- Published 10 times a year (monthly except for combined issues of June-July and in August-September).
- Annual subscription \$1.00. Single issue 10¢. Bulk lots of 10 or more copies to seminarians and other groups at 5¢ a copy.

GUIDE  
2852 Broadway  
New York, New York 10025



# Guide Lights

## DIALOGUE: THE CHURCH IN FORMATION . . .

There is a truth about which we might remind ourselves from time to time, viz., that Christian dialogue is truly one of the acts of God in his Church today. Such self-encouragement is necessary for two reasons. First, because dialogue has become so very commonplace it is no longer a source of wonder and its repetition suggests a danger of ecumenical ritualism. Second, after years of dialogue permanent unity seems as elusive as ever.

When we speak of 'dialogue' we usually mean a coming together of Christians to communicate with each other on matters of faith and grievance. As an event, dialogue is both a meeting and a communion of persons in the name and service of Christ. This last characteristic is what gives dialogue an ecclesial importance over and above the normal intensification of human relationships that can be expected from good personal communion. It is what makes it an act of the Church, and of enduring importance in her life.

## DIALOGUE AS SACRAMENT . . .

At base, ecumenical dialogue is a real though imperfect sign of the Church herself. It is real because it actually expresses in a quasimaterial way a grace-action which faith tells us is taking place, and which the dialogue is helping to bring about. It is imperfect because, in the nature of things, it falls short of the Eucharistic assembly which is the full and perfect sign of the Church. Nevertheless, imperfect though it may be, a dialogue is still a sign of the Church for it involves a gathering of Christians come together in the Lord's

name to do his will, and this is the raw material from which Christ has always fashioned his Church.

What happens in dialogue is, in inchoate form, the same kind of thing that happens more fully both in the Church and in the Eucharist, and it is because of this similarity, that dialogue can lay claim to being a sign and precursor of both. What is common to all three situations is this: Christ is present in an assembly of believers and through his presence saves and unifies the members of the assembly. Look carefully at each of these situations.

## CHRIST PRESENT AND ACTING . . .

During the time when the Church was historically in the process of formation, Christ was present to her in natural human fashion, moving about, teaching and encouraging. In the Eucharist, He has a sacramental presence, and in dialogue there is at least the kind of presence He promised "wherever two or three are gathered together in my name." The presence of Christ in each of these situations, though different, is equally real as are his actions. And his acts are saving and unifying in all three. The New Testament bears witness to his first presence and action in the events of his earthly life that accomplished our salvation and built the Church. The Eucharist brings to His members a here-and-now experience of this salvation and continually edifies, ("builds up") the Church by deepening the union among Christ and his members. In dialogue, too, Christ's presence is salvific and edifying, for we believe that when Christians meet out of fraternal love in obedience to the Lord's will and in his name, His will "that all may be one" is at work and our mutual union in

and with Christ is strengthened and the Church is 'edified.'

There is, then, both a presence and a unifying action of Christ at work in Christian dialogue. Moreover, like most actions of the risen Christ this one is expressed through visible signs. Here again, an ecumenical dialogue foreshadows the mystery of both Church and Eucharist. All three, — Church, Eucharist and dialogue, — are in outward appearance assemblies, gathered in obedience to the summons of God, and all three express in differing mode and degree the same reality, viz., Christ's saving and unifying presence among His people. Christians believe that the Eucharistic assembly is the visible sign of the Church herself, even as the latter is the visible sign of Christ. The Eucharistic assembly renders present, observable and operative the community of worshipers and believers that is the people of God. It also expresses externally the unity of the Church in structurally adequate fashion. However, there are other Christian assemblies besides the Mass, and to the extent that they are structured from ecclesial elements, these too, can actuate in a less perfect but truly significant way the assembly of God's people. Christian dialogue is one of these.

#### ECCLESIAL ELEMENTS . . .

In dialogue there is a community which has assembled, as we believe, in response to the summons of God. It is not a permanent community nor is it perfectly structured along the lines laid down by Christ. Yet, it is the only kind of community that those present are able to achieve at present in obedience to the known will of the Lord. It is not precisely the Church, but it is not a no-Church either. There is something ecclesial here, if only in embryo. There is a partial expression in visible fashion of the unity Christ gave his Church. There is a real influx of grace and charity. The personal confrontation and exchange occurring here expresses at least a Common Lord, a common obedience and trust, and a *most* uncommon love. All of us in dialogue believe that the unity given by Christ comprehends more than this, but we accept this as the most that separated brothers can express at this time. A groping toward unity, however incomplete, is better than passive disunion.

The sacramental quality of dialogue can be seen from another angle. The com-

munity setting not only tells Christians in dialogue what they are doing in relation to both the Church and the Eucharist, but also helps to bring about what it signifies viz., the unity and edification of the Body of Christ. These are moments of actual unity among Christians, and the unity of the Church is really enhanced by them. It is not simply a natural strengthening of common bonds through the exercise of courtesy and an effort to understand. What gives it a kind of *ex opere operato* character is that it is consciously undertaken through obedience to the will of Christ and along the general ecclesial lines he laid down in his Church, i.e., assembly, prayer, charity. When the sign, i.e., the assembly itself takes place under these circumstances, we believe that the unity it signifies is truly advanced by the power of the Spirit moving through the sign, imperfect though it is. Hence, the sacramental quality of dialogue.

#### DIALOGUE AS EFFICACIOUS SIGN . . .

No one suggests that dialogue is a distinct or independent sacrament, but for the reasons outlined it does participate in some way in the great sacrament that is the Church, and very definitely points toward the sacrament of the Eucharist as its organic fulfillment even as the forepart of the Mass points toward the full Eucharistic liturgy.

So, for those who are discouraged by dialogue's failure to bring about permanent unity, this sacramental quality is a reminder that mutual dialogue has intrinsic Christian value as well as the more observable values of heightened understanding and good will it obviously brings about. In addition to the impetratory value of the common prayer of the participants, it is an exercise of doing the truth in charity among the ecclesial elements designated by Christ as the material for his Church. In a sense we are doing what Christ commanded at the last supper — 'love one another,' 'keep my commandments,' and so, as often as we do these things, we do them in commemoration of him. If in these little assemblies of conversation we cannot carry out his most magnanimous command "take and eat," the desire to do so is very much with us and we look forward to the time when as a result, in part at least of these dialogues we will be able to obey that command in full.